

Gibbons Creek Watershed

Description of the watershed

The Gibbons Creek watershed encompasses a 13-square-mile area at the west end of the Columbia River Gorge. The watershed has three creeks — Gibbons, Campen, and Lawton, as well as lakes and ponds in the Columbia River flood plain. Gibbons Creek flows from Nichols Hill, through a wooded canyon, to the Columbia River flood plain east of Washougal. Campen Creek is a tributary of Gibbons Creek. Lawton Creek originates in Skamania County and flows directly into the Columbia River near the Clark County boundary with Skamania County.

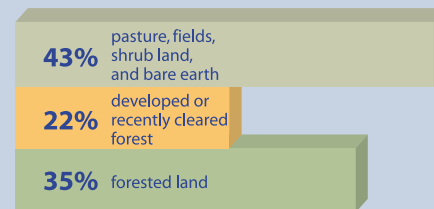
Most of the watershed is hilly, upland area. Land uses include fields, pastures, rural residential homes, and small farms. Washougal is the only urban area in the watershed.

Gibbons, Campen, and Lawton creeks provide about seven miles of salmon habitat. The value

of the watershed for salmon habitat, however, is somewhat limited by difficult access through an elevated channel that connects Gibbons Creek to the Columbia River.

Campen Creek Park in Washougal, the 3.5-mile Steigerwald Trail, and the Steigerwald Wildlife Refuge along the Columbia River provide stream access or wildlife viewing.

Land uses in Gibbons Creek Watershed



Using a summer 2000 satellite image, the University of Washington determined that the Columbia Slope watershed is approximately 71% urban, 8% forest, 21% grassy areas or fields.

How healthy are the Gibbons Creek watershed streams?

The Washington Department of Ecology monitored Gibbons Creek periodically during the 1990s, and more recently as part of a program to address harmful bacteria in the creek. Based on this information, the state listed Gibbons Creek as not meeting state standards for fecal coliform. Both Gibbons and Campen creeks sometimes have high nutrient concentrations.

The state provided information to assess stream health for 11 percent of the 29 miles of year-round streams in the watershed. The overall stream health is fair, based on good water chemistry, but has poor harmful bacteria ratings. Fisheries agency

information shows that Campen Creek and the lowest reaches of Gibbons Creek are too warm in the summer, making them less suitable for fish.

The stream health problems in this watershed are typical of developing rural areas — bacteria from livestock or waterfowl, possible septic system leakage, elevated temperatures where streamside shade is lacking, and streambed erosion due to stormwater runoff from fields and developed areas.

The following bar charts show the overall health ratings from four perspectives. About 89 percent of the streams are not assessed using field testing.

Overall health



Stream life health based on health of streambed creatures



Health for recreational use based on presence of harmful bacteria



General water quality based on temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen

